(c) The standing guidelines for Embassies abroad in such cases require prompt action in taking up the complaints of Indian workers with the local authorities concerned and providing all necessary support to them.

Release of fishermen and civilian prisoners by Pakistan

1003. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRI ABANI ROY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the recent past Pakistan has indicated its intention six times to release 400 Indian fishermen and civilian prisoners, including the cases of 22 Sikh youths, in their custody but nothing has materialized so far;

(b) if so, whether this is attributable to our ineffective diplomatic efforts or there are other hidden rationale behind this state of affairs;

(c) since when such fishermen are in custody of Pakistan; and

(d) the details of the efforts made at diplomatic level to get them released so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) As per available information, Pakistan had 416 Indian fishermen in its custody apprehended by Pakistan Maritime Security Agency since January, 2002 onwards. Pakistan, in the past, on several occasions indicated its intention to release over 200 fishermen. No follow up action was, however, taken by Government of Pakistan for release and repatriation of these fishermen. Government have consistently taken up the issue of their release and repatriation with the Government of Pakistan. As a result of Government's efforts, Government of Pakistan agreed to release 280 fishermen on 24th February, 2003. Pakistan has yet to confirm the release of Sikh youths and other civilian prisoners.

Indo-China relations

1004. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state: